

Quadrupled state budget equals more government

Bleeding-heart writers in Topeka like to cast it as a good-versus-evil sort of thing. You might, too.

The miserly Legislature has refused to raise taxes, they say, and state services will suffer. As far as it goes, that's true.

The Legislature, controlled by conservatives appalled by the growth of state government, has said "enough."

It's refused to raise taxes, forcing us to take stock and decide what's important.

The facts are appalling.

In the last 40 years, the state budget has grown from \$527,000 million to \$11.8 billion. Even when you take inflation into account, the growth is more than quadruple.

That's a lot of government, a lot more than many Kansans want or need.

And by forcing us to evaluate state spending and set some priorities, the Legislature is doing us a real favor.

Taxes are high enough. Some would say they're still too high, despite cuts in the Bill Graves era. But they are unlikely to go up, not in this Legislature.

And that is not a bad thing.

Taxes are little more than a legalized way

of stealing. They're not charity and they're not voluntary. It's important that they be spent only for vital public causes.

When a state's spending quadruples in four decades, someone should be asking where the money went. State programs have multiplied. They live forever, feeding on the built-in lobby created by those who benefit from the program; the employees and the clients.

The only way to stop this is to limit tax growth, and the Legislature sees that.

At this point, no one is talking about cutting state spending, mind you. Just limiting growth. That alone is difficult as heck.

But in electing this Legislature, that's clearly what the people of Kansas asked for. Priorities.

Schools remain No. 1.

Roads and colleges are close behind.

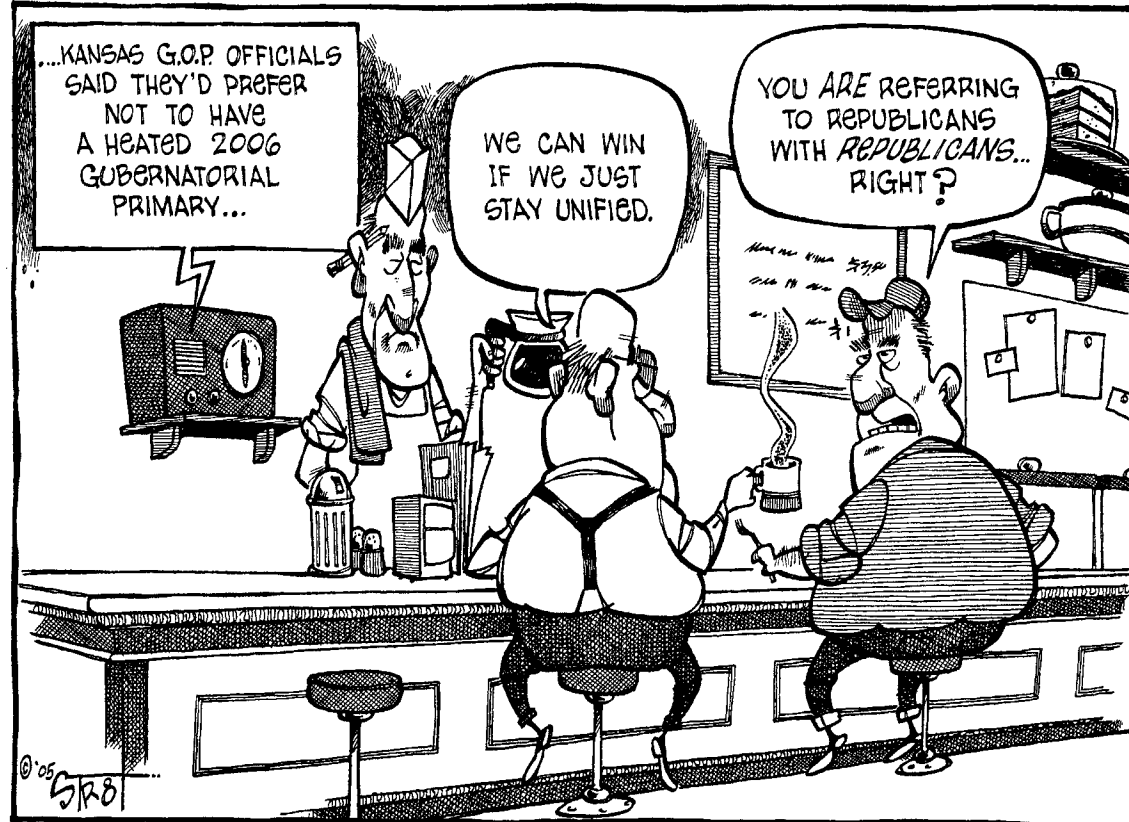
Welfare has ever-increasing demands, but must be limited.

Cities and counties won't get any more "revenue sharing" from the state.

And the rest of the government will have to settle for the crumbs.

And none of that is all bad, at least not if you're a taxpayer.

— Steve Haynes



Looking back makes difference

Just wait until tomorrow: disasters become adventures and failures become learning experiences.

We had several adventures and a learning experience on our vacation to Georgia and South Carolina earlier this month.

Adventure No. 1 was our trip to Tybee Island, Ga., where we arrived at midnight to find that our condo reservations, booked by our eldest daughter, actually were for the next weekend.

We ended up having a place to stay, a great time and a story to tell our grandchildren. We got our skin damaged by the sun and our hair ruined by the salt water, that is, we worked on our tans and swam in the ocean.

Adventure No. 2 was locking the keys in the truck.

We borrowed our youngest daughter's Explorer. She gave us her spare key.

The truck has both a clicker and a combination keypad, but she didn't give us the clicker and, since she bought the truck used, daughter didn't know the code for the keypad.

All was well for days. Then one evening, I left a window rolled down and Steve put the key back in the ignition to roll it up. He then grabbed something off the seat and closed the door.

I asked if he had locked the truck, and without thinking, he opened the door, hit the lock and closed it before remembering that the one and only key was in the ignition.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Oops. Well, we didn't have any plans for the next day anyway.

We were in Augusta, Ga., and daughter was an hour away in Columbia, S.C. It was a work day. She didn't have an extra two hours to come rescue her stranded parents.

We called a Ford dealer. He said it would cost \$45 to put the truck on the computer and find out the code. Just bring it in, the man said.

Yeh, right. If we could bring it in, we wouldn't need the code.

Next we called a locksmith. They'd send somebody right out.

It cost \$50 to get a slim jim tucked in between frame and window and jimmy the door. However, the locksmith showed Steve where the keycode is hidden in the back of the truck. You can't see it unless you have the back end open, so it's safe, but we know where to look now.

Steve figured the locksmith costs \$5 and the information \$45. It was a good deal, and the bruises he got from kicking himself are almost all gone.

Adventure No. 3 was the loss of Steve's sunglasses.

This was embarrassing for both of us, since I had been telling him not to leave his sunglasses on the dash.

He took a corner too tightly and his sunglasses slid right out the open window.

Of course, my glasses were on the dash next to his. I always follow my own advice. Eldest daughter was only able to grab one pair — my cheap plastic pair.

He was able to retrieve his glasses before oncoming traffic turned them into road pancakes — after all, they're prescription and the frames alone are expensive. The lenses, however, were scratched beyond repair.

He really hated to tell me about the incident, but the little clip-ons he bought sort of told on him.

I had to admit, however, the only reason I had nagged him about leaving his glasses on the dash was that I was afraid the medal frames would get too hot and burn him.

After getting home, he found out the lenses were guaranteed against scratches.

I think he got off easy on that one.

Finally made it to Grandma's

"Are we there yet? How many more minutes till we get there? G'ma, what's a horizon? Are we there yet? Is Pa-Pa going to be awake when we get there? How long do I get to stay? Are we there yet? I remember my Spanish, wanta hear? Can we eat at McDonald's? Are we there yet?"

You get the idea. That was part of the nonstop chatter driving back from Dallas with my 6-year-old granddaughter Taylor. She's a good little traveler, though, and doesn't complain, except for the time it takes to get to our house.

In years past, her mother and I would meet halfway and spend the night at a motel with a pool. We would make "the trade" and each return home. That would split the trip up and not make such a big day either way.

This year, I drove all the way to Texas to be with Kara during her surgery (everything went fine) and brought "Tay" home with me for three weeks. She's just in time for Vacation Bible School, an antique engine show or two, wiener roasts with her cousin Alex, work with me, a few piano lessons and whatever else we can find to do. I know the time always goes too fast.

I warned her parents that in a few



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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years when I retire, I'd like her to come for the summer. Thought I better give them a little while to get used to the idea. Both of my girls and lots of my nephews spent entire summers at the farm. I think it was good for them.

Last week, I took cut flowers into the office almost every day. That's the only way I was going to get to enjoy them. I'm afraid everything will be gone by Memorial Day.

Speaking of which, this is my 40th alumni year. Rose (Pachner) Riffle has taken on the lion's share of the organizing of our class get-together, but I get to help decorate our class window on Main Street. Perfect timing, because when I was cleaning out that closet last week, I found lots of pictures and newspaper clippings. My, how young we looked. We thought we knew it all, though.

My friend Sonia sent me a graduation picture of her youngest daughter, Amy. I remember visiting in the hospital the day she was born. Sonia said Amy doesn't know yet what kind of a career she wants. I gave her the same advice my mom always gave new graduates: "Your first year of college is more about figuring out what you don't want to do."

From the Bible

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Ezekiel 18:30

Reader appreciates careful driving

To the Editor:

Warm weather means that our children will be on their bikes, and no matter how many times we tell them to watch for cars or to stop at intersections and stop signs, they don't always listen.

As we have been working in our yard, we have been amazed and grateful at the number of drivers going east and west who stop at the intersection of Maple and Beaver (the stop signs are on the north and south sides), as well as at the number of southbound drivers who creep

slowly across the intersection after stopping. The guys at Southwest Implement are especially careful as they head up Maple Street to the highway.

Because of our retaining wall, it can be a dangerous corner, but our boys don't think about that — even after we've grounded them from their bikes. They just know that if

they get enough speed, they can coast all the way to Rodehaver.

So for all of you who are extra-cautious at our corner, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for looking out for our children.

Brenda and Tim Breth Oberlin

Letter to the Editor

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

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Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$28 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$32 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$35 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$20 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)



Automatic door grabs feline

The first thing I heard was Cynthia yelling.

"Stephen," she yelled. She always calls me Stephen, even when she's excited.

"What's going on out there? Is it a cat fight?"

We had arrived home from vacation just before midnight on a Sunday.

She had to get up early to work in Norton; I had to go in late to get things ready for the day in Oberlin.

We'd unloaded the car and tossed the dirty clothes from a week's vacation in the South down the chute. After checking the car, I'd come in, pushed the remote to close the big door and closed the kitchen door.

That's when all heck broke loose. I couldn't hear much, but Cynthia, who was upstairs with a bedroom window open, could hear plenty.

I went outside to see what was up. It was noisy, all right, and it was a cat.

But not the sound of a cat fight, or a cat in love.

This was a cat in trouble, rapid fire, staccato meows:

MeowMeowMeowMeowMEOW!

Molly, the big, bossy cat, was in the driveway, staring up at the garage door.

A stranger, a yellow-and-white cat Cynthia has thought might be the focus of the noise, was in the alley, also looking up.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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My gaze followed theirs, and there, hanging from the top of the garage door and very much pinned against the frame, was Miss April Alice.

MeowMeowMeowMeowMEOW!

She must have had a hold of the top of the door by her front paws. Her back legs were kicking and flailing. Her tail was flying. And she was stuck.

Fortunately, modern garage doors are designed not to pinch or crush stuff. While her lungs were getting a workout, and she was scared stupid, April Alice obviously was in good health.

I rushed in and pushed the button. The door went up.

I could hear a cat moving around on top of the door.

Cynthia came running out in a bathrobe.

"What happened?" she asked.

I told her the short version as I threw things aside so I could lower the attic ladder and get to the shelf over the garage. Not knowing if a

trip to the vet's was next, I sent Cynthia to get dressed.

As I got to the upper deck, a trembling April Alice came out from under the platform and stepped up off the door. I guess she was exploring in there after we unloaded the car. Maybe, being a cat, she was taking a nap.

When I closed the door, it must have taken her by surprise, and she wound up hanging on for dear life.

I lectured her on safe behavior in the garage. She accepted a petting.

For a cat who's just used up a couple of her nine lives, she was in remarkably good shape: no broken bones, no cuts, no obvious injuries at all.

And she started purring as I stroked her.

"Listen here, young lady," I intoned.

Who knows if cats ever listen to lectures. I doubt it. But ours all run from the garage door now.

I know that much.

Awareness prevents abuse, neglect

To the Editor:

I want to thank everyone from the Decatur County Interagency Coalition who helped raise awareness on prevention of child abuse and neglect by distributing blue ribbons across Decatur County, and everyone who wore the ribbons during the month of April.

Child abuse and neglect is a subject that no one likes to talk about or even think about, but it's an issue we have to acknowledge and learn more about in order to help prevent it. It's a tragedy that extends beyond childhood; research shows that the effects of abuse often carry into adulthood.

As adults, those who have suffered abuse and neglect risk sub-

stance abuse, depression, physical disabilities, learning delays, criminal activity and continuing the cycle of abuse. Child abuse and neglect not only hurts the child, but it hurts the community by raising the costs of child welfare, education, health care, and juvenile justice. We need to learn more about child abuse and neglect and not be afraid to talk about it.

Lately, there has been a lot of national attention about sex offenders. Just because we live in a small community doesn't mean that we should

not be concerned or aware of any sex offenders living in our neighborhoods. To find out if there are any sex offenders living in your county, log onto www.accesskansas.org/kbi/.

For more information on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, contact the Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center at (785) 462-8152.

Roxy Cabral, director, Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center, Colby

Letter to the Editor